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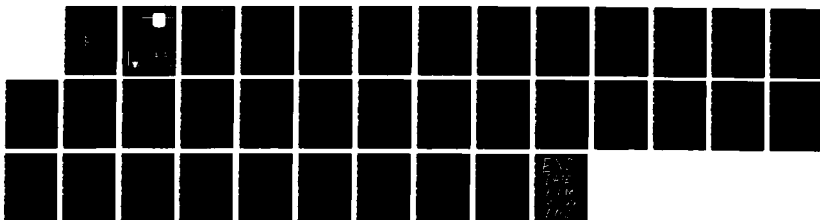
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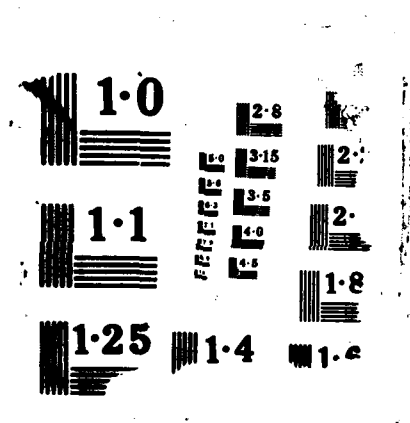
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CAN THE CLIMATE OF AN ORGANIZATION BE MODIFIED
AND MANAGED TO ENSURE ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE?

BY

DR. JUNE R. MOSS

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

CAN THE CLIMATE OF AN ORGANIZATION BE MODIFIED
AND MANAGED TO ENSURE ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE?

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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ABSTRACT

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Military Commanders have received training in both managerial and leadership principles. These concepts can be used in both predominately military or civilian DOD organizations. Those who make the general officer rank have been successful leaders in prior assignments. However, when assigned to a predominately DOD civilian organization, some commanders are reluctant to deal with their civilian employees. This is usually due to the complexity of the civilian personnel management system. Therefore, they delegate the responsibility of the civilians to the Civilian Personnel Officers. This practice tends to negatively impact the climate. This study seeks to examine four components (vision, people interaction, perception, and leadership) which shape organizational climate. The purpose behind this study is to show that Military Commanders who command predominately DOD civilian organizations, can apply these components to move their commands towards organization excellence. The analysis of the literature support the argument that military commanders can use those skills that they obtained during their military experiences to lead civilians as effectively as they lead the military. Recommendations were made concerning how military commanders can lead predominately civilian organizations towards excellence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	Page ii
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. VISIONS TRANSLATED INTO ACTION.....	6
III. THE IMPACT OF PEOPLE INTERACTIONS.....	10
IV. PERCEPTION.....	15
V. LEADERSHIP.....	19
VI. CONCLUSION.AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	23
ENDNOTES.....	25
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	28



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CAN THE CLIMATE OF AN ORGANIZATION BE MODIFIED
AND MANAGED TO ENSURE ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE?

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Military Commanders (CDRs) have received training in both managerial and leadership principles. They have also developed the expertise to successfully implement necessary changes which will lead their commands towards organizational excellence. However, when commanding a predominately Department of Defense (DOD) civilian organization, some CDRs are reluctant to deal with the civilians even though they are an integral part of the DOD team. The CDRs tend to delegate the responsibility of civilians to the Civilian Personnel Officer (CPO). This is due in part to the complexity of the civilian personnel management system. In a predominately DOD civilian organization, this practice can lead to low morale as the employees may perceive that they are not an important part of the military team. Low employee morale will have a negative impact on organizational climate. When employees believe that they are treated differently and their input to the

mission is not appreciated, the mission suffers from poor quality and low productivity. Peters and Waterman clearly depict the importance of a leader not making a difference between subordinates:

....Excellent companies treat the rank and file as the root source of quality and productivity gain. They do not foster we/they attitudes.¹

Since there is every reason to believe that resources will continue to be scarce and the central theme of "doing more with less" will continue, it is important that CDRs get maximum productivity from all employees - civilians and military. They must provide the kind of leadership which will motivate employees to accomplish the mission in an efficient, effective, and economical manner. They must lead the organization towards excellence. Joseph S. Wholey described specific steps which lead to organizational excellence:

1. Get policy and management agreements defining what would constitute "performance" for the organization.
2. Assess organizational...performance in terms of agreed on quantitative or qualitative performance measures.
3. Use information on organizational...performance and variations in performance to stimulate high performance.

Step 1 is a prerequisite to 2; Step 2 is a prerequisite to 3...These "steps toward excellence" keep implicit the important management task of putting - and keeping - in place an organization...that has the potential to achieve high performance.²

Peters and Waterman said that most everyone will agree that people are the most important asset. However, excellent companies live their commitment to people. They place emphasis on the customer and the employees.³

For CDRs who have spent the majority of their careers with troops in the field, they must transition to a work force of predominantly civilian employees. They must free themselves from stereotypes and myths concerning civilians. This is important since CDRs must be able to move to the head of an organization with civilians holding many of the key positions. The CDRs must be able to link military roles, missions and forces to national commitments while at the same time, they must understand, be sensitive to, and respond to their civilian population.

Although CDRs have been successful leaders in prior assignments, it appears that problems which manifest themselves in climate surface when they command organizations which are predominantly civilian. Therefore, they are not as effective as they could be. The primary reason appears to be that they fail to apply some of the principles associated with effective environments which they learned in the military. There are some components associated with climate that they can use to effectively lead a predominantly civilian organization towards excellence.

For the purpose of this paper, climate is defined as the collective impact of policies, expectations, priorities, operating values, management techniques, and leadership styles on motivation to get the job done right.⁴

Since climate is directly related to effectiveness, CDRs shape the climate through both direct and indirect application of their leadership.⁵ Sigmund Freud clearly describes the leader's impact on a group:

The leader can be central to the cohesion and viability not only of nations and armies but of smaller, more ordinary groups. "The loss of the leader in some sense or other, the birth of misgivings about him, brings on the outbreak of panic."⁶

This paper examines four major components. The first and most important is the CDR's vision of what the organizational climate should be. If the CDR has no vision, he does not have a standard by which to measure performance. The second component concerns key interactions among the personnel. The CDR should clearly communicate what he wants this interaction to be. The standard for the interaction among his personnel must be a part of his vision if he is to stay in touch with the facts and benefit from historical experience and simple common sense. The third component is perception. It can impact on the climate of an organization in either a positive or a negative manner. If employees perceive that they are less than a full partner on the

team, the mission will suffer. The last component to be examined is leadership. It is the component that not only directs but influences all personnel in an organization. Therefore, without effective leadership, organizational excellence is impossible.

This paper will tie all four components (vision, key interactions, perception, and leadership) together and show that the climate of an organization has much to do with why certain organizations do extraordinarily well while others wallow in mediocrity.

A CDR who has spent the majority of his career with troops on the battlefield can effectively transition to a predominately DOD civilian organization, and implement changes which will lead to organizational excellence.

Chapter II

VISIONS TRANSLATED INTO ACTION

Duty, Honor, Country. These three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be.

- General of the Army Douglas MacArthur
Thayer Award Address, May, 1962

In order for the CDR to successfully lead his command to excellence, he must have a vision of where he plans to take his organization. General Walter Ulmer, an unconventional and highly effective U.S. Army Combat Commander stated:

Vision comes first. The essence of a general's job is to assist in developing a clear sense of purpose...To keep the junk from getting in the way of important things.⁷

In developing his vision, the CDR must believe that civilians are capable and productive members of his command. He must also believe that they are an important part of the military team and they can, if given the opportunity, make a notable contribution to the mission. In addition, he should realize that the civilians view him as the most powerful person in the organization. Therefore, they expect him to set the standards

and influence the relationships among supervisory and non supervisory personnel. In discussing visions, Roger H. Nye stated:

The vision of one's self as a military commander makes sense only for those who yearn to attain and exercise power. Military command requires a concentration of power in one person - power begotten by unusual legal ordination and energized by the will of a person to wield that power. Commanding is a peculiarly military act, rarely undertaken in civilian pursuits where power is customarily more diffused.

To command is to direct with authority. To command a military organization is to think and make judgments, employing specialized knowledge and deciding what those commanded will and will not do...To command in peace and war is to direct how human beings will conduct themselves towards each other...To command, therefore, is to think and decide, to feel and moralize, to act and wield power.⁸

In developing his vision, the CDR should expect a certain amount of resistance to its implementation. Alfred D. Chandler of Harvard University, talked about the difficulty associated with making changes:

Companies, like people, find it difficult to change, mainly because people run companies. "You get stuck in your ways,"...It's a complicated process...I would argue that you can't change unless you completely rethink what it is you are doing, unless you have a wholly new vision of what you are doing.⁹

As Chandler stated, people resist change. Many senior civilians have been the source of continuity for the organization and may be viewed as obstacles to the implementation of the CDR's vision (plan). Therefore, the CDR may choose to resist the challenge which comes with implementing necessary changes,

thereby, letting his vision remain just an idea. If he does, he has betrayed the country's confidence that has been entrusted to him. Every CDR has the responsibility to use his power to develop the most efficient, effective, and economical organization possible.

If the CDR is to be truly successful, he must also have the insights and values spoken by General George C. Marshall in his talk to the first graduating class of the officer candidate school at Fort Benning, Georgia, in September 1941:

...When you are commanding...the efficiency of your leadership...will primarily be determined by your character...by the previous reputation you have established for fairness, for that high-minded patriotic purpose, that quality of unswerving determination to carry through any military task assigned to you.¹⁰

Even though the vision originates in the mind of the CDR, he must depend on his key staff to implement it. No matter how brilliant or determined the CDR is to implement his vision, he must seek the cooperation of his key staff to put his ideas and plans into action.¹¹

Since the CDR will have to delegate responsibility and authority down his chain of command, his vision must include what he wants to accomplish. He must task his senior staff to

determine and implement the "how." Peters and Austin sum up communicating one's leadership vision in their statement:

The nuts and bolts of leadership. More is called for than technique. You have to know where you're going, to be able to state it clearly and concisely - and you have to care about it passionately. That all adds up to vision, the concise statement/picture of where the company and its people are heading.¹²

When I think of the task of translating a vision into action, I am reminded of a statement my business professor made to a group of MBA students, "As a leader, it is more important that you be respected rather than liked." A CDR who has the respect of his subordinates will be able to effectively translate his vision into action as respect comes from knowing that the leader is competent, fair, and dedicated to carrying through the military task assigned to him.

A CDR who has made his subordinates aware of his vision and the role they are to play in its accomplishment has taken the first major step in moving his command towards excellence.

Chapter III

THE IMPACT OF PEOPLE INTERACTIONS

By force of will and against his inner disposition, he created himself in the image to which he aspired.

- Blumenson, The Patton Papers, 7.

For his vision to become reality, the CDR must communicate to his key staff how he expects them to interact with each other and with their subordinates. He must also hold them accountable for implementing his vision as well as communicating it down to the lowest eschelon of his command. If employees believe the leader cares about them and their careers, they will try to do work that meets his standard if they know what it is. Peter Drucker gives a very clear statement concerning the worker and the leader's vision which emphasizes the need for participative management.

...The worker will assume responsibility for peak performance if he has a managerial vision, that is, if he sees the enterprise as if he were a manager responsible, through his performance, for its success and survival. This vision he can only attain through the experience of participation.¹³

An increased awareness of employees' humanity and aspirations can effect a change in interpersonal relationships that will lead to a climate which fosters quality and quantity work. The CDR should emphasize the fact that the military and the civilian, the supervisory and the non supervisory employee,

require each other and all will benefit by mutual cooperation.

Competence in interpersonal relations should be an important goal for the CDR. He should seek to raise the level of interpersonal relations within his command by providing the necessary training to help his managerial (managers and supervisors) staff become more aware of themselves and more sensitive to their employees; improve their skills in listening and in communicating, and in the planning and implementation of change.¹⁴

Every organization as an organic system is dynamic, therefore, interaction among its members lead constantly to internal change. The CDR should create a climate that is conducive to change without creating obstacles (fear and anxiety) to productivity.¹⁵ Supervisors who lack good interactive skills or who use fear as a motivational tool are proving to be a liability as today's employees are accustomed to using the system to bring about changes to improve the organizational climate. For example, if they are experiencing problems, they will generally use the grievance and/or the complaint system to seek relief. Therefore, the CDR should view changes in normal employee behavior as a signal that something within the organization needs attention. Excessive absenteeism, turnover, sick leave usage, grievances and complaints are indicators that something is wrong within the organization. If attention is not given to resolving the problem, the mission suffers. Therefore,

the old ways of doing business are vanishing and management must pay attention and respond to the changes in workers' concerns, their value systems, their attitudes, and government laws and regulations.

Line managers and supervisors must be encouraged to better interact with their employees. Until there is positive interaction, it is going to continue to be increasingly costly and difficult to operate large organizations productively¹⁶ as millions of dollars each year are spent processing numerous complaints and grievances.

Since human talent is an important part of every organization, it is important for the CDR to create a climate which stimulates creativity, imagination, and innovation to motivate his subordinates. To do this, all employees must be treated as adults and as partners. They must be treated with dignity, with respect and as the primary source of productivity gain.¹⁷ In essence, employees must be treated as an important asset.¹⁸ Therefore, the task facing the CDR is to motivate his subordinates, to enlist their participation, and to mobilize their desire to work.¹⁹

Interaction between supervisory and non supervisory personnel also involves keeping the employees productively engaged. Few things demoralize employees as much as sitting around waiting for work.²⁰ Employees know when they are making

a contribution to the mission. They want to work in an atmosphere of trust, a climate that is challenging, invigorating, and fun. A climate where the rewards are related as directly as possible to performance²¹ and where management cares enough about them to keep them productively employed and considers them a valued member of the team. Peter Drucker does an excellent job of stating how employees feel about meaningful work:

People are proud if they have done something to be proud of - otherwise it is false pride and destructive. People have a sense of accomplishment only if they have accomplished something...The only basis for genuine pride, accomplishment and importance is the active and responsible participation of people in...their...work.²²

If he really wants to lead his command towards excellence, he must not support the "Don't Rock the Boat Mentality."²³ If he does, there is no chance of motivating employees to be innovative. He must make certain employees are not punished for honestly stating their views and opinions concerning the best way to accomplish the mission. He must also task his key staff to give awards and recognition to "deserving" personnel.

Since loyalty, like an elevator, runs down as well as up, there are a number of buttons the CDR can push to make for positive and productive interactions among his subordinates. These include accessibility and listening ability on the part of upper management, good communications, an effective channel for

expressing dissent, and a reliable performance evaluation system. Without them the CDR's best intentions may get stuck between the floors.²⁴

Climate relates closely to trust and confidence in ultimate fairness,²⁵ therefore, the CDR must demonstrate his true feelings by taking actions that are visible to his people. It is not enough for him to be quietly honest. His beliefs must be overt and he must announce policies that will help to establish the climate he desires. His people will know him by the kinds of rewards and punishments he uses for proper and improper conduct. In addition, he must not be too far removed from the moral actions of his people.²⁶ In essence, his key staff can help to make or break him.

Therefore, the CDR should at every opportunity surround himself with key people who can interpret the mission's needs and lift people out of their everyday selves into their better selves.²⁷ He should surround himself with people who have morals and a sense of ethics as their actions will color employees' perception which will ultimately determine the climate. In essence, the CDR must recognize that his leadership will be the deciding factor concerning the type and quality of interaction that exists within his command.

Chapter IV

PERCEPTION

The interaction between people form the bases for creative experience²⁸ and it also tends to color employees' perception concerning management. While higher level personnel are generally capable of greater perceptual accuracy concerning functional relationships, subordinates are more accurate in perceiving organizational relationships.²⁹ Therefore, it is not only wrong, but it is impractical for the CDR to ignore the perceptions of his employees.³⁰

Employees' perception determines to a large degree what the climate of an organization will be. If they perceive that their wants and needs are being met, their input to the organization is appreciated, and management actions are just and fair, their perception will be positive. In addition, they will feel that they have a vested interest in the organization and will work hard to live up to the supervisor's expectation.

If the CDR and his staff communicate shared values, act consistently, and provide training and coaching to the employees, they will not need to intervene so often to "fix" things. If they keep their promises, the employees will keep theirs. When everyone is headed in the same direction, there is integrity and trust, there is also aggressive cooperation. When everyone is

headed in the same direction, there is every reason for team members to trust one another, and every reason to anticipate innovative action and creativity.³¹

Employees want to know what is happening. They want to play a part in helping to create a better organization. Quality Circles and Management by Objectives have been used to help bring the non supervisory personnel into the decision making process. These programs have been effective vehicles in making the employee feel like a part of the management team and thus have helped the employees to perceive the organization in a positive light. Peters and Austin state:

Every opportunity to involve people in the business in its broadest sense is a coaching opportunity, and none is too small to overlook. If learning a new skill is important to your team's success, focus on it. Use every device you can think of to facilitate learning.³²

Some of the CDRs for whom I have worked had monthly coffee chats with non supervisory employees. The CDR would sit and chat with them for an hour to learn their thoughts concerning the organization, policies, etc. This gave him first hand knowledge of what the employees felt to be problems or potential problems within his command. The employees were selected at random. Their names were made available to the other employees in the organization so matters which concerned employees could be discussed at the meeting. The employees looked forward to the meetings and most of them left with a positive perception concerning the CDR. They felt he was honest and sincere. If he

said he would look into a matter, he did. If a situation could not be changed, he gave an explanation.

Another and probably the most successful management technique concerning fostering a positive perception was the CDR who would spend so much time each month walking around his command talking to employees. This is in line with the principle of management by walking around (MBWA). If CDRs want to insure that the employees' perception of their leadership is what it should be, the best way to acquire that is to use the principle of MBWA. When employees know that the leader cares enough to walk around his command and chat for a few minutes with different employees, it causes positive reactions. Monthly coffee chats and MBWA are management techniques which give the CDR the opportunity to feel the pulse of his command from the lowest echelon - from his subordinates who actually do the work. In addition, it helps to foster a caring attitude and reinforces the perception that the CDR is interested in all of his subordinates. These techniques are reinforced by Roy Rowan who states:

...Homework for the intuitive leader doesn't mean committing to memory a host of facts and figures...Moseying around the office, plant, or marketplace and feeling the pulse is an important part of the preparation process for setting off an intuitive spark...Know that creative lightning doesn't often strike those who stay closeted inside the executive suite.33

Peters and Austin state:

...To make MBWA credible...frequency is a key issue...the more you are around, people will figure out what sort of person you are when they've had a chance to be exposed to you.³⁴

Perception has a lot to do with climate. If employees perceive that the CDR's actions are in their best interest, they will do their best to live up to his expectations. As an example, present day CDRs can take a lesson from General U.S. Grant's relationship to his soldiers on the battlefield. They always knew that he was ready to rough it with them and share their hardships on the march. There was nothing in his manner to suggest that there was any gulf between him and the men who were winning his victories. His fidelity produced a reciprocal effect, and is one of the chief reasons why they became so loyally attached to him.³⁵ MBWA may not have been known as a management technique then but General Grant knew the importance of establishing a productive and meaningful relationship with the men who did the work of fighting the battle. The same relationship can be established between the CDR and his civilian employees.

The majority of CDRs could apply the same principles and concepts to their civilian work force as General Grant used with his soldiers. This would help to create, in the minds of the civilians, the kind of perception which fosters organizational excellence.

Chapter V

LEADERSHIP

Leadership is the fulcrum on which the demands of the individual and the demands of the organization are balanced.

- Warren Bennis

Human talent is an important part of every organization. The task of stimulating creativity, imagination, and innovation in the workplace is one of the great leadership challenges of our age.³⁶ Top management's commitment is probably the most critical requirement of any development effort. Unless this commitment exists, the most that can be expected is a change in the managerial performance of a few. Development can only begin when top management is willing to consider changes and suggestions for improvement in the existing climate. This implies a commitment to assume responsibility for rectifying those organizational practices impeding development.³⁷ Therefore, the CDR must be willing to assume responsibility for his employees' performance by creating a climate that leads to organizational excellence.

The essential strategy of leadership in mobilizing power is to recognize the arrays of motives and goals in potential

followers, to appeal to those motives by words and actions, and to strengthen those motives and goals in order to increase the power of leadership, thereby changing the environment within which both followers and leaders act. Many factors in the traditional organizational structure tend to paint individuals as cogs in a wheel. Over the past decade, many businesses have changed and begun to view employees as integral parts of the management team. In Megatrends, Author John Naisbitt quotes Rene McPherson, Chairman of the Dana Corporation, "Until we believe that the expert in any particular job is most often the person performing it, we shall forever limit the potential of that person in terms of both his contribution to the organization and his personal development."³⁸

The CDR must examine his own motivation and attitude and see that his subordinate managers and supervisors do likewise. This can be quite painful as no one likes to admit that his behavior may foster hard feelings among employees. People don't like to admit that they need to change. But if change is to occur, it will come about largely because of hard work on the part of everyone involved.³⁹ The CDR must initiate the change by having a vision concerning his command, the interaction among his subordinates, and the kind of perception he wants his subordinates to have of his leadership. He can do this because he has the power to lead his organization towards excellence.

If organization excellence is his goal, his pervasive theme must be the same as that in excellence companies - emphasis on the customer and the employees.⁴⁰

In a predominately DOD civilian organization, the customer is the military. The CDR will generally exert extra energy to make certain that the military needs are met in the most efficient and effective manner. The problem lies with leading the civilians. However, if problems exist with the civilian population, the service to the customer is not what it could be.

Therefore, the ultimate test of the CDR's leadership is the realization of intended, real change that meets his employees' enduring needs.⁴¹ The CDR of a predominantly DOD civilian organization must use visionary leadership to make his organization more effective by adopting the concepts and methods used by successful large private companies⁴² and discussed in this paper. He must realize that public employees (civilians and military) are the single most important determinant of the quality of our government. In other words, it is the people delivering the service who control the quality, the quantity, and the costs of what is delivered.⁴³ The efficiency of the CDR's leadership will be primarily determined by his character, reputation for fairness and that high-minded patriotic purpose and unswerving determination to carry through the military task.⁴⁴

The relationship between the CDR and his subordinates (military and civilians), supervisory and non supervisory employees should be open and flexible rather than closed and fixed. In addition, it should be allowed to change with the requirements of the situation if the organization and society are to draw the maximum benefits from it.⁴⁵ This people oriented leadership (customers and employees) will lead his command towards organizational excellence.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the complexity of the civilian personnel management system, some CDRs who command a predominately DOD civilian organization, tend to delegate the responsibility of the civilians to the CPO. This practice tends to negatively impact the organizational climate as civilians perceive that they are not considered an important part of the CDR's team. Civilians desire the same recognition as the military. They want to be productive members of CDRs' teams. While they realize that CDRs must delegate authority and responsibility to their line and staff subordinate managers and supervisors, they want them to remain their leaders. Civilians do not want their fate to be relegated completely to CPOs or to be treated differently.

It is customary for CDRs to have a vision of where they plan to take their organization. In developing their vision, it is important that CDRs believe that civilians are capable employees and will be productive if given the opportunity. The vision should also include the kind of people interactions that will prevail. CDRs should encourage their subordinate managers and supervisors to treat employees with dignity, respect, and as the primary source of productivity gain. In essence, the bottom line must be concern for the customers (the Military Services) and for the employees.

When the CDRs are in charge, they must be in charge, otherwise their commands will consist of confusion and rumors. They must do more with less, achieve excellence in quality and quantity, and recognize that they are the vital link between their civilian employees who support the military, and the servicemen who so gallantly defend our homeland and our interests abroad. The quality of their leadership can motivate all employees (military and civilians) to take pride in the organization and be enthusiastic about their work. In addition, CDRs' actions are influential in determining the interaction among their employees and their perceptions concerning the command. In essence, CDRs are the catalyst that can insure that the climate of their organization will lead to organizational excellence.

It is recommended that CDRs of predominately DOD civilian organizations:

1. Look upon civilians as members of their team.
2. Be sensitive to the needs of their civilians.
3. Use the skills obtained during their military experience to lead civilians as effectively as they lead the military.

ENDNOTES

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